

THE COMPETITIVE DEVELOPMENT GROUP PROGRAM

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Introduction

Now in its fourth year, the Competitive Development (CDG) Program is still going strong, and the promotion rate of CDG selectees has been exceptional! Although a promotion is not guaranteed as part of the CDG Program, a large percentage of CDG members have a competitive edge when competing for vacant positions. Currently, 18 CDG members of year group (YG) 97 (75 percent), 15 members of YG98 (65 percent), 4 members of YG00 (44 percent), and 5 members of YG01 (20 percent) have been promoted to GS-14 or equivalent personnel demonstration broadband level positions. What is this exceptional program all about? Let's go back to the basics.

What Is The CDG Program?

An initiative of the Army Acquisition Corps (AAC), the CDG Program was established as a 3-year professional and developmental training program. Offering expanded leadership training and experience opportunities for competitively selected GS-12 and -13 (or equivalent personnel demonstration broadband level) Corp Eligible (CE) and AAC members, the CDG Program is designed to develop civilian acquisition leaders for the Army of the future.

To support the concept of "One Integrated Corps," officers were included in the CDG Program for the first time in 2001. However, the policy of including officers in the CDG Program is currently being

re-evaluated. In addition to broadening and reinforcing leadership and management skills, the CDG Program seeks to develop leaders representing a broad cross section of acquisition career fields (ACFs) and to expand acquisition experience in one or more ACFs, organizations, or command elements.

Who Can Apply And How?

To be eligible for the CDG Program, an applicant must be CE or an AAC member who is Level III certified in his or her primary ACF. The announcement soliciting applications to the program is posted on the U.S. Total Army Personnel Command (PERSCOM) Web page at <http://www.perscom.army.mil/opfam51/ambmain.htm>. The complete CDG Program solicitation for applications is located at <http://dacm.rdaisa.army.mil/>.

The following documents are required to apply:

- Signed Acquisition Civilian Record Brief (ACRB),
- Senior Rater Potential Evaluation (SRPE),
- Three most recent performance appraisals and associated support forms,
- Résumé,
- Signed mobility statement,
- Data Self-Certification Form, and
- Most recent Standard Form 50.

Non-AAC members can obtain ACRB update support by contacting their local Acquisition Career Manager (ACM). AAC members, however, obtain ACRB support by contacting their ACM at PERSCOM. The SRPE is a valuable tool used by the senior rater to identify the applicant's potential ability. The mobility statement is required for accession into the AAC, which occurs at the completion of the 3-year period. To date, all geographical moves have been voluntary.

In an effort to streamline the application process, the Army Acquisition Career Management Office (ACMO) has standardized the application packets for all AAC selection boards. Applicants need only submit the documents listed above. Additional information will not be considered. If an application for the CDG Program was submitted the previous year, a complete new package is not necessary; only updates to the package are required.

CDG Members

CDG members are best-qualified applicants who are selected through a competitive selection board process. They are assigned to a centrally funded position on the Army Acquisition Executive Support Agency Table of Distribution and Allowances for a 3-year period. In addition, CDG members are provided centrally managed education, experience, and training opportunities designed to provide career and

leadership development opportunities in a structured, highly visible program.

Below are paraphrased excerpts of CDG member comments regarding their experiences in the program:

The CDG Program provides me with the opportunity to demonstrate and hone leadership and acquisition skills necessary to become one of the Army's leaders of tomorrow. Through a three-faceted planned program of developmental assignments, education, and training, the Army is ensuring that a supply of acquisition-experienced civilian employees and military officers will be available to provide the leadership needed to serve the warfighters of the 21st century. Opportunities for CDG members to develop their careers are only limited by each CDG's imagination.—Bernie Gajkowski, YG01

I was selected for the CDG YG00 class and placed into the office of the most exciting program, the Future Combat Systems (FCS). The Program Manager, LTC Marion Van Fosson (the most powerful lieutenant colonel in the Army, in my opinion), was hand-picked for this job, and having worked for him more than a year, it is clear why. I started as Director for Modeling and Simulation on Aug. 1, 1999, and received a temporary promotion on Oct. 1, 2000, to Director of Systems Integration. The FCS Program is extremely challenging and complex. A program like FCS is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and if it were not for the CDG Program, I would have been watching from the sidelines.—Daniel Pierson, YG00, promoted 2001

When people realize that I participated in the CDG Program, the first thing they say is that they were planning to apply but just haven't gotten around to it. Then they ask if the CDG Program is beneficial and worth the effort. I answer that it is definitely worth the effort and, if they need it, I'll help them start their package. The bottom line is that it is your career, and you need to take control of it and take advantage of any opportunity that stretches your abilities.—Rusty Weiger, YG97, promoted 1998

The CDG Program is awesome. During my first 4 weeks in the program, I enhanced my human resource management skills working with the FCS Task Force. I developed position descriptions and determined the staffing level for each position, thus ensuring civilians would have career progression opportunities within the task force. My second assignment was Acting Executive Officer for the Military Deputy to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology (ASAALT). In this capacity, I interfaced with senior leaders on acquisition policies and coordinated acquisition-related staff actions within the Office of the ASAALT. Currently, I am reviewing and comparing forms for the Council of Colonel Reviews. In addition, I am scheduled to attend two Harvard Leadership Courses, the Congressional Operations Class, the National Training Center (NTC), and the Army War College. The CDG Program has allowed me to do something different and to "think outside the box." This is an excellent program to enhance your managerial and leadership skills and to network with senior leaders in the Army, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and industry.—Kenneth Wright, YG01, selected for Army War College

As evidenced by these comments, the CDG Program benefits the Army and the individual, and the program provides a true return on investment! By educating and training its future leaders today, we will have a better Army tomorrow.

Developmental Assignments

The ACMO solicits developmental assignments from the acquisition community worldwide. As a result, CDG members participate in various and multiple developmental assignments in program management offices, program executive offices, and director, systems acquisition offices.

CDG members may also attend various leadership courses and conferences. Recently, CDG members completed courses at Harvard and the Congressional Briefing Conference on Capitol Hill. Afterward, one

YG01 member stated that the briefing provided in-depth knowledge on how Congress operates—information that would support and improve the working environment.

Operational Experience Training has also been scheduled at NTC, Fort Irwin, CA. The training includes a force-on-force observation tour of the Operations Center, an instrumentation orientation at the Star Wars Building, a Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System (MILES) demonstration, and an opposing force (OPFOR) mission "sandtable" field rehearsal. Additionally, NTC command briefings, OPFOR briefings, and foreign weapons intelligence briefings are provided.

Conclusion

The AAC and the Deputy Director, Acquisition Career Management are fully committed to the growth and success of the CDG Program. As such, adjustments will be made to the CDG Program to ensure the continual selection of high-quality personnel. Selection to the CDG Program is an outstanding opportunity for all CE and AAC members. Supervisors and senior raters should encourage their eligible subordinates to compete and take advantage of this exceptional program. The CDG Program is intended not only to benefit those selected, but the future AAC and the Army.

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